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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2006

In Today's Papers

Turkish Markets Slump amid Inflation and Interest Rates Fears
All papers: The Turkish Central Bank Tuesday intervened in the foreign exchange market by selling foreign currency to calm extreme volatility and prevent the lira from weakening beyond 1.6 to the USD. Turkey's influential industrialists' group TUSIAD said the reasons for the market turbulence are not just economic, but include issues of political stability and the slow pace of reform. TUSIAD Chairman Omer Sabanci said it was impossible for the business world to remain a bystander in view of the economic turbulence, and he charged that delaying reforms by chasing after daily fixes amounts to leaving Turkey's economy "permanently open to crises." "It looks like it will difficult to stick to the 5 percent inflation projected for the end of the year," Sabanci maintained, claiming that upper targets would be exceeded when the inflation figures for June are released. Deputy Prime Minister Abdullatif Sener told Sabanci that while everybody has the right to "speak and think incorrectly," it is too early for such an assessment. Mainstream papers criticize the Central Bank for "wasted its resources" to cope with the global turmoil, whereas pro-government Yeni Safak quotes experts as saying that the intervention was very timely.

Turkey Launches EU Accession Talks; EU Document Criticizes Turkey
All papers: Turkey officially began its negotiations with the EU with the closing of the chapter on science and research that took place at the EU-Turkey Partnership Council meeting in Luxembourg yesterday. After the meetings held on June 12, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, his Austrian counterpart Ursula Plassnik, and EU Commissioner for enlargement Olli Rehn held a joint news conference, with the EU officials warning Turkey about fulfilling its commitments with respect to Cyprus, and Gul asking that the Cyprus problem not "poison" Turkey-EU relations. Gul said that if a "train wreck" occurs on the road to the EU, Turkey would not be the only party to suffer damage. Rehn and Plassnik said that all sides should look to the future, not the past, and called on Turkey to recognize all member states. Gul later told the Turkish press that

it was "not realistic" for the EU to expect Ankara to make all the concessions, stressing that Brussels is also obliged to lift trade restrictions against Turkish Cypriots, a move so far also blocked by Nicosia.

The common position paper issued after the Turkey-EU Partnership Council meeting noted that "the pace of change has slowed in Turkey in the last year; and further efforts are needed, especially regarding the implementation of reforms." The paper added that "although human rights violations are diminishing, they continue to occur and there is an urgent need to implement legislation already in force." On civil-military relations, the document said that "while some changes have been introduced over the last year, further efforts are needed to ensure full civilian control over the military in line with practices in EU states. Public statements by the military should relate only to military matters and should only be made under the authority of the government." With regard to free speech, the document stressed that "despite recent positive developments where prosecuted individuals were acquitted, there are still a number of cases pending against individuals for non-violent expression of opinion on the basis of Article 301 of the new Penal Code." In the area of religious freedom: "no progress has been observed over the last year in addressing the difficulties faced by non-Muslim minorities, such as property rights, schools, and training, residence and work permits for clergy." The paper urged Turkey to reopen Halki Seminary. It welcomed the progress made in local private broadcasting in Kurdish in some cities in southeast Turkey. The paper underlined continued problems with domestic violence and especially "honor killings," which continue in spite of the heavy penalties mandated by the new Penal Code. The paper also noted that "the EU unequivocally condemns the actions of the PKK," and called for an "end to all provocations and violence immediately." The paper said "the system of village guards should

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be abolished and steps taken to remove landmines in border regions."

"Continue, but How?"

Sami Kohen commented in the mainstream Milliyet (6/14): "The Association Council meeting in Luxembourg provided a long list of homework for Ankara, including pending reforms and their implementation. It is not clear to what extent the AKP government will be able to take further steps on issues of human rights and religious freedom. The issue of preventing of torture is also a matter that will take some time, since implementation needs to be verified. Given these current issues, the EU should be as patient and as eager as Turkey is about the accession process."

Foreign Minister Gul's Trip to Eurasia

Hurriyet reports that FM Gul will be traveling to Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan this weekend for official meetings. Gul confirmed reports that a possible visit to Tehran is also on the agenda but no definite decision has been made. Responding to Hurriyet's question on the issue, Gul was quoted as saying that 'I will go to Tehran if the visit would serve a useful purpose.'

'Social Preferences in Turkey': A Survey by Two Private Universities

Bugun, Vatan, Radikal, Zaman: A survey carried out by Isik and Sabanci universities shows that 40 percent of people across Turkey said they believed in democracy and freedoms, but that a military administration would work better than an elected one. 56 percent support Turkey's EU membership, and another 55 percent are not happy with the functioning of democracy in Turkey. 70 percent said the Islamic headscarf could be allowed in universities and state institutions, and 9.1 percent wanted "Sharia" law implemented in Turkey (the figure was 26.7 percent in a poll conducted in 1996.) 39 percent said government policies in the past year have negatively affected their economic situation, but 55 percent pronounced themselves satisfied by the performance of the Turkish Government. The survey included the responses of 1,846 Turks in 23 provinces.

Editorial Comments

"Scenes Too Hard to Forget"

Mete Cubukcu commented in leftist Bugun (6/14): "The scenes from Gaza only add to the tragedy of the Israel-Palestine issue. After so many incidents like this over so many years, how can one believe that peace will prevail in Palestine and Israel? The tears in the eyes of the Palestinian baby have the potential to create trauma in people's minds and defer the possibility of peace. Such images only help to enhance the existing hatred. Regardless of the political games and talk, the massacre on the Gaza beach will be marked as a turning point in the minds of many people. The scenes from that place will be remembered as a new symbol of the agony of the Palestinians."

"ICO's Views on America"

Kamuran Ozbir commented in nationalist Ortadogu (6/14): "Given its current 57 members, the Islamic Conference Organization is the world's second largest international organization after the United Nations. Therefore its views on world issues should be carefully considered. As the chairman of the OIC recently pointed out, the Islamic world thinks that the US has been making mistakes in its Middle East policy. The OIC believes that Washington is taking steps in the region before making thorough and correct analysis. The US presents itself as pro-Israel, which works against a settlement of the Palestine-Israel issue. The occupation of Iraq and the mistakes in the fight against terrorism - including scenes from Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo -- have contributed to the rise of anti-Americanism in the Islamic world."

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TV Highlights
NTV (7 a.m.)

Domestic News

- The trial of the owner and chief editor of fundamentalist daily Vakit began in Istanbul. The defendants have been charged with showing the judges of the Council of State as targets to terrorist organizations on the paper's front page on February 13. The two could face up to 34.5 years in prison.

- Riot police in Ankara used batons and pepper gas to forcibly disperse a group of demonstrators made up of relatives of political inmates protesting against maximum security F-type prisons.

- Amnesty International stated its concern over Turkey's new anti-terror draft law, which would expand the definition of terror offences, and warned against the passage of the draft without significant changes. The AI report said that law enforcement officers in Turkey continue to use excessive force in the policing of demonstrations: "Police regularly use disproportionate force against demonstrators, particularly targeting leftists, supporters of the pro-Kurdish party DEHAP, students, and trade unionists."

- On Tuesday, Turkey's parliament, in line with government promises, approved a cut in the corporate tax rate to 20 percent from 30 percent in a move aimed at drawing more foreign investment to Turkey. President Sezer is not expected to veto the measure.

International News

- President Bush met Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in a surprise visit to Baghdad.

- A Pew Research Center poll of 17,000 people in 14 countries shows that most believe the presence of US troops in Iraq poses a greater threat to Middle East stability than Iran's nuclear aspirations.

- The Chief of Australian Defense Forces, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, and the visiting commander of the Turkish Armed Forces, General Hilmi Ozkok, signed a defense cooperation agreement in Canberra yesterday.

- The new leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, Abu Hamza al-Muhajer, vowed in an internet statement to avenge the death of al-Zarqawi through

"horrific" attacks in the coming days.

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WILSON